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PAUL NASH

AN EXHIBITION OF APPLIED DESIGN

1908–1942

C. E. M. A.

1943

FOREWORD

IF the replanning and reconstruction of the post-war period are to be given full expression, the employment of trained architects, artists, and designers in every branch of our industrial, commercial, and domestic life is essential. It is therefore a suitable moment to make an exhibition of applied design.

In asking Paul Nash to undertake a retrospective exhibition of his work in this field, CEMA has chosen an original and serious artist who is a living proof of the falsity in distinction between the so-called 'fine' and 'applied' arts. In his own words, applied design is 'an integral part of the main system'. His development as an easel painter and a designer has progressed on closely interwoven lines, in a manner which should be an example to many other painters. How versatile has been his taste and how instinctive his skill in designing sometimes for the machine and sometimes for handicraft is shown in this exhibition.

Many of the exhibits are in materials and techniques which must be temporarily unrealisable. The examples of collage however suggest that here is a technique which might well be used in wartime as a means of occupational therapy which would recondition damaged or unused muscles and might at the same time rouse the dormant powers of the imagination.

PHILIP JAMES

INTRODUCTION

In assembling this exhibition of applied design at the request of the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts, I have had in mind a special purpose which determines the character of the exhibition. In so far as the examples of craft and design collected here may be regarded as evocative and stimulating to any 'encouraging' degree, the material is selected to that end rather than as a display of individual versatility. Wherever possible, for instance, the designs shown are those which have been carried out and, where it has been practical, the method of their execution is shown, if only in photographic records.

On the other hand the exhibition is contrived to show, to the utmost extent within its small compass, the development and change of view taking place over a number of years in the practice of applied design alongside the practice of painting in oils and water colours, of what are known technically as 'easel' pictures. From the point of view of a designer making a critical retrospect, it becomes obvious that the two occupations, picture making and applied design, as expressed in relation to printed and woven textiles and in decorations for books and so on, do not work eccentrically but in close sympathy. Although the latter occupation is often referred to as a 'side line' it cannot be regarded as a branch line or siding but rather an integral part of the main system, the lines merging together

or seemingly diverging at times but always moving forward in the same purpose and direction. An idea of colour or form may arise from observation of natural objects, for instance, and find expression in the medium of a textile pattern: and parallel to this a picture painted in oils or water colours or engraved on wood will evolve out of the same origins. Again, places of great character like the coast scene—including the Romney Marsh, which stretches between Hythe and Rye, where, as at Dymchurch, natural and artificial forms have equal pictorial significance even amounting to architectural beauty—such places constantly evoke images in the painter's mind which cannot be fulfilled in only one form of expression, but are constantly and variously resolved throughout the application of his methods of design, adapting their features to all kinds of materials according to the necessity of his inspiration. A slight idea of such preoccupations may be found in this exhibition. But the pursuit of any new technical experiment and practice is worth nothing unless it yields something approaching the adventure of the explorer, the scientist's research. Each task is a new problem to be solved in its proper way.

In the present exhibition there will be found 15 or more different kinds of application in design from the pen and ink decorations for book plates, which were first essays and first means of remuneration, to the experiments in glass and wood murals and finally the binding

for Bernard Shaw's autobiography just before the War.

Almost every one of these various examples of applied design has required more or less expert understanding and execution. There is another section of the exhibition, however, which shows specimens of a kind of applied design where expert skill is not necessarily required to, so to speak, 'solve the equation'. This is in the assembling of objects and the making of 'collage'—we have no satisfactory word in English to use in place of the French expression. There is no space here to expound the technique of either preoccupation. But there are perhaps a sufficient number of specimens of objects, actual or in photographic images, and enough examples of various types of 'collage' to stimulate general interest and provoke, eventually, individual enthusiasm and practice.

PAUL NASH

CATALOGUE

1. Bookplates. 1908.

   First essays in applied design.

2-4. Designs for book jackets.

5. Wood engravings. 1921-28.

6. Set of wood engravings for *The First Creation*, published with Bible text, and printed at The Curwen Press in Koch's Neuland type. 1924.

   The first illustrated book issued by The Nonesuch Press, 1924.

7-8. Original designs, with facsimile collotypes coloured by the artist, for the 30 drawings in Sir Thomas Browne's *Urne Buriall* and *The Garden of Cyrus* printed and hand-coloured at The Curwen Press. Published by Cassell & Co. 1932.

9. Drawings for the text pages of No. 7.

10. Printed book (No. 7). [In the showcase.]

11. Typographical decorations.

12. Pattern papers designed and engraved for The Curwen Press. [Others are in the showcase.]

13. *Poised Objects.* Water-colour. Derived from the designs made for *The Garden of Cyrus.*

14. *Landscape of the Megaliths.* Autolithograph drawn for Contemporary Lithographs Ltd.

15. Progressive pulls to show 4-colour printings of No. 14 before the key (black) printing is added.

16. *Totems.* Water-colour made from the artist's photograph of actual objects.

17. Furnishing textile designed for Old Bleach Linen Co. 1936.

18. Furnishing textile (*Romney Marsh*) designed for Calico Printers Association. 1932.

19. Working drawing for No. 18.

20. Working drawing and rough printing of textile for Footprints Ltd.

21. *Birdcage.* Design for textile not yet carried out. 1928.

22. Unit of No. 21 drawn for blockmaker.

23-24. Woven textile designed for London Passenger Transport Board, and used in the upholstery on the Underground.

25-26. Collage to show colour-scheme for interior of L.P.T.B. trolleybus. 1937.

27. Original designs for hook rugs carried out by Edinburgh Weavers. 1936.

28-29. Designs for small pattern textiles.

30. Block printed dress materials designed for Cresta, Ltd. 1927-30.

31. Sketch designs for cups and saucers.

32. Photographs of two sets of sherry table crystal and whiskey tumblers for Stuart Advertising Agency Ltd.

33. Glass mural. Detail showing wall design in a bath room (also intended to be used as a practice room) made for Tilly Losch. 1932.

The main areas of midnight blue obscure glass broken by panels of dark rose and white mirror glass. The doors and surround to the electric fire are of fluted dark glass.

34-35. Views of glass bathroom.

36. Wood mural. Design in 8 veneers of varying colours and figurations. Carried out to advertise the work of the Timber Development Association. 1936.

Part of the display shown at Charing Cross Underground Station.

37. *Archer*. Photograph of surrealist object. 1936.

38. *Forest*. Photograph of wall object. 1938. The trees are hung in slots and are interchangeable.

39. *In the Marshes*. Object collage. Bark and dried stalks. 1938.

40. *Landscape at large*. Object Collage. Envelope, pine bark, and pieces of shale. 1937.

41. *Ghosts of the Hellebore and the Thorn Apple escaping from the Woods*. Object collage. Water-colour with dried flowers and fruit. 1942.

42. *Ghost of the Monster about to rise*. Collage made from newspaper photographs. 1942.

43. *Rose of Death*. Collage. Made from mother of pearl, etc. 1940.

44. *Portrait of Lunar Hornet*. Collage. Made from map and shale. 1937.

45. *Desert Dream*. Collage made from newspaper photographs. 1935.

46. *Don't forget the diver*. Collage. Water-colour and newspaper photographs. 1942.

47. *Edge*. Photographic enlargement from the artist's negative. 1936.

48. *Ditch*. Photographic enlargement from the artist's negative. 1936.

49. *Minotaur*. Enlargement from artist's negative to show 'personeity' natural object. 1943.

50. Four stage designs. Scenes from *King Lear*. (Player's Shakespeare published by E. Benn Ltd.). Lent by Mr. Robert Donat. 1925.

51. Stage design. *Platform facing the Sea*. 1923.

52. Photographic enlargement to show model for *King Lear's Wife* by Gordon Bottomley. 1922.

53. Collage Drawings on the theme *Enemy Image. Follow the Fuehrer*—(1) *Above the Clouds*, (2) *Under the Waves*, (3) *Over the Snows*. Lent by Major George Holt. 1942.

54. Three posters.

55. Poster for London and North Eastern Railway.

56. *Totes Meer* (*Dead Sea*). 1941. [3 frames.]

57. *Monster Field*. 1939. [3 frames.]

Two photographic enlargements of painting and studies made in water-colour and with camera to show the development from the view of the actual phenomena to the completed pictorial idea.

58. Original painting for Shell-Mex poster *Footballers Prefer Shell.* Lent by Shell-Mex Ltd.

59. Oil painting. *Encounter of Two Objects.* 1936.

60. *Sussex Landscape.* Collotype reproduction by Soho Gallery Ltd. 1928.

61. *Forest of Dean.* Colour photogravure reproduction printed by The Sun Engraving Co. for The National Gallery. 1941.

62-63. *Bomber on the Moor* and *Moonlight Voyage—Flying against Germany.* Two lithographic reproductions printed at The Curwen Press for The National Gallery. 1942.

64. Three wood engravings.

SHOW CASE. Specimens of bookbinding, pattern papers, printed material, surrealist objects, etc.

Prints of the reproductions Nos. 14, 61-63 and the majority of the wood engravings are for sale. Prices on application.

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